

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicant responds herein to the Office Action dated August 22, 2006.

Responsive to the rejections of claims 3 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, the applicant has amended these claims in a manner which is believed to fully remedy the noted grounds of rejection. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

Substantively, claims 1, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 14 stand rejected on grounds of anticipation by Kamikawa, and claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 stand rejected on grounds of anticipation by Hayashi. Claim 3 is stated to obvious over Hayashi and claim 7 is stated to be obvious over Hayashi or Kamikawa, in view of Yoshitani. Reconsideration of these rejections is requested in view of the amendments to the claims herein and the following remarks.

Respecting claim 1, it is respectfully asserted that the inner gas is supplied downward from the upper surface of the process chamber, so that a uniform downflow is formed in the process chamber, and this process is nowhere disclosed in the applied reference. Indeed, the feature that the exhaust port is located in the vicinity of the liquid surface, so that vapor generated through vaporization from the liquid surface is exhausted quickly, is also not disclosed in the prior art. This feature is helpful, because it allows the diffusion to be suppressed in the direction of the process chamber.

Turning to claims 2 and 3, the restriction of the phrase “heating element of light radiation type” to a halogen lamp and to the infrared heater described as the preferred embodiment the invention, clarifies the claims and highlights their distinction over the prior art. Hayashi does not describe this feature. The clarification that the previously mentioned phrase “includes a translucent member” is formed by a member which allows light (infrared rays) to irradiate from the halogen lamp (infrared heater) to pass through, further clarifies and distinguishes the claims over the prior art.

Turning to claim 11, with an air curtain being formed in a direction parallel to the liquid surface, vapor generated through vaporization from the liquid surface is kept from being diffused in the direction of the process chamber. Such formation of an air curtain in the vicinity of the liquid surface is not disclosed in the prior art of record and, accordingly, is asserted to distinguish over the prior art. As such, applicant has demonstrated that all of the independent and dependent claims in the application clearly distinguish over the prior art.

Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the application, allow the claims as amended and pass this case to issue.

THIS CORRESPONDENCE IS BEING
SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY
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Respectfully submitted,



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